

## Amity Amidst a Crisis

Another sodden morning of the rains. Another day locked up in the same room. Another day seeing the same faces. Another day staring into a device for hours. Another day drowning in recurring events. Another day in quarantine. Another day living the new reality.

One. Two.

The blight had washed over the world altogether. Life at an oblivious state hadn't quite anticipated a detriment of this scale. Many were left at complete losses while others, joyous of the leisurely time left available on their hands. Many like myself, once enjoyed the break from life, however, grew to become lonely and deprived of the socialization that is imperative for human beings to function.

One. Two.

It was once estimated over 70% of the population would become victims of this harrowing coronavirus. This certainly proved true for almost a year. People dropped dead like flies and became prey to the predatory virus. People like me, who coerced themselves that they would be spared, fell and landed the hardest.

One. Two.

I lied in a crisp hospital bed, pondering the cause of my current state. IV's pricked at my skin, leaving my arms sore for days. My eyes were heavy, and I was unable to keep them open. Doctors scurried and nurses followed, masked up and sealed. Protected from me. The busy ambiance left me feeling isolated, even though the environment was far from that of isolation.

One. Two.

A blue curtain with bumps and ridges along its body enveloped me and shielded me from what lied beyond the hospital bed I was in. I contemplated: Were there others like me? Was my family here to visit me? Or perhaps, I was just dreaming? These questions lingered day and night as my lungs deteriorated day by day.

One. Two.

Faces became blurry and all I could see was the blue curtain. Days passed slowly. With each second, of every minute, of every hour, it became harder to breathe. Over a few days, I heard rustling outside of the curtains. Though I couldn't taste or smell, my hearing senses had remained untouched.

One. Two.

It was only a week later that I had discovered what truly lied behind the curtain. A vibrant voice tore through,

“Hey, anyone there? I’m Charlie, what’s your name?” it asked. Much to my dismay, it was a child.

“No,” I replied briefly.

“Oh what a lovely name! Nice to meet you No!” the voice squeaked. I immediately rang for a nurse and requested to move away from the bothersome child.

“I’m sorry Cynthia, given your condition, it isn’t possible to move all this equipment. You’ll just have to deal with it,” the nurse refused.

One... Two...

Though they were heavy, my eyes rolled and burned with hatred for the nurse. I turned on my side, away from the curtain, using the pint of energy I had left.

One. Two.

Day by day, the child began speaking to me. Regardless of whether I responded or not, he went on and on about himself, his likings, his family, and even included what he disliked. I thought hard in attempts to recollect memories from my childhood. The few I recalled were much similar to what he was going through.

One. Two.

Every day, I grew to enjoy Charlie's company. Although I didn't ever speak to him, I assumed my silence implied that I was interested in listening to him.

One. Two.

Days passed and my condition was worsening. What was once a vibrant voice had grown to become dull and dreary and reduced in its presence entirely. Something was wrong with Charlie. I needed to speak to him.

"Charlie, are you there?" I asked as I shifted towards the curtain. Nothing.

"Charlie? Charlie?" I repeated. No response. I pushed myself off of the hospital bed, forcing myself up. I dragged my medical oxygen machine and reached the blue curtain. My fingers grazed over it feeling the roughness of the curtain. I pushed it aside only to discover an empty bed.

One. Tw...

I woke up to several blurry faces hunched over me. My eyes slowly pried open. I squinted and tried to assess my surroundings. All I could see were the curtains that surrounded me; except, these weren't blue. I looked around frantically as my heart rate began to soar and my throat began to close. Doctors and nurses crowded around me and slipped me into an oxygen mask.

"Where is Charlie?" I cried although I couldn't muster up the energy to do so.

Tears seeped from my eyes, soaking my face.

One.

A stout nurse pulled back the curtain. A child. A child engulfed in tubes, wires, pipes, and IV's.

"Charlie," I whispered.

"Take me to him," I demanded of the nurse. My bed was moved next to his. I reached my hand over and took his in mine. His small, warm hands fit perfectly into mine. I stroked them and wept, my body heaving and throat closing with every shudder. Charlie's eyes pried open and he stared straight at me. My heart leaped. He was still with me; more importantly, I could see him. His auburn hair and defined facial structure were just as I had imagined.

"I'm sorry Charlie," I pleaded. The monotonous beeping of machines sounded up the room.

"It's alright, No," he responded using the last few breaths he could muster up. I let out a lethargic giggle and smiled weakly at him. I clutched his hand and stared into his eyes. At that moment, I came to a realization: he was infected as well. Pools of tears began to fill my eyes as well as his.

"Breathe with me," I said to Charlie.

"Breathe."

One. Two. Three.

One. Two. Three.

We breathed in unison, hands enveloped. We were in solidarity; united whilst fighting against the virus.